Youth voices on global citizenship: Deliberating across Canada in an online invited space

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Abstract
This article examines the processes of youth engagement in an 'invited space' for Canadian secondary school students. The organizers created a participatory citizenship education space in which Canadian students discussed their views and visions and developed their policy position on global citizenship and global citizenship education. The content and process of *The National Youth White Paper on Global Citizenship* (2015) demonstrated that youth have important policy knowledge and understand they live in a globalized world that includes unacceptable inequalities and oppressions. They also understand that, through acts of citizenship, these conditions can be changed. The article discusses how students were engaged in developing public opinion and working in the public sphere while developing the policy paper on the topic of global citizenship.

Keywords: youth engagement, global citizenship, policy

Introduction and conceptual framework
It is the case that youth are seldom welcomed into authentic participatory spaces when school curricula are planned or designed. A curriculum is done *to* youth, not *with* youth. In the 2015 Canadian project that produced *The National Youth White Paper on Global Citizenship* (which can be found at https://goo.gl/m0Frc6; hereafter referred to as the 'White Paper'), several people working in the area of global citizenship education (GCE) provided a space where youth perspectives

could impact GCE policy and practice. This article examines the processes of youth engagement in this 'invited space' created for Canadian secondary school students to provide their views and visions for global citizenship and GCE. The organizers worked to create a participatory citizenship education space, the content and process of which are of interest in this paper.

Canadian education is a decentralized system, with each province and territory developing its own system of education provision. The sole exception is the federal government's control of First Nations' education since Canadian Confederation. These multiple systems create a very disjointed set of education policies within Canada, and there are few opportunities for national discussions on education issues, goals, or programmes. The area of GCE in Canada has an uneven take-up across the country. Most teacher education programmes have not made it a priority, and neither have most education ministries, although there has been ongoing interest, research, and programming by formal and informal education actors across the country since about 2000. The topic continues to be under-theorized and often works as an empty signifier to be filled with a multitude of engagements with internationalization and globalization, frequently in contradictory and confusing ways (Pashby, 2013; Jorgenson and Shultz, 2012; Shultz, 2007). Recent interest in GCE by UNESCO opened up new policy spaces and opportunities to have different discussions about GCE policy and programme possibilities. Global citizenship is included along with education for sustainable development in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and is a key theme for UNESCO (2015). A major goal of GCE, according to UNESCO (2014: 16), includes involving 'multiple stakeholders' and 'support[ing] learners to revisit assumptions, world views and power relations in mainstream discourses'. It was in this context that the White Paper project began.

As the organizers of this White Paper, we identified the process as an invited space, drawing on the work of Cornwall (2006), Gaventa (2006a; 2006b), Cornwall and Coehlo (2004), and Lefebvre (1996). When formal institutions, such as schools, strive to open spaces for democratic deliberation, particular considerations are made regarding the problems of established relational dependency neutralizing the space for engagement. Cornwall and Coehlo (2004) and Cornwall (2006) describe an invited space in a formal institution as one that is a site for engagement, which can be transitory and which enables participants to respond to a particular policy moment. Invited spaces also 'offer the potential for reconfiguring relations of rule' (Cornwall, 2006: 2). It is this understanding of invited space that helped to frame the process which resulted in the 2015 White Paper. In addition, we used Engin Isin's (2008) framework of 'acts of citizenship' to understand both the youths' claims and their enactment of citizenship. A key concern of education in general, and citizenship education in particular, is understanding how youth move from being subjected to

other people's acts of citizenship and policy to becoming citizens able to articulate rights for both individual and social wellbeing, make claims for these rights, and begin to enact themselves as citizens. Drawing on Isin (2008: 371–3; 377–9), we posed four questions about the White Paper as a space for a deliberative process to understand how, within the invited citizenship space, youth were able to engage in acts of citizenship: (1) Did the process produce subjects as citizens? (2) What sites of contestation for citizenship were evident? (3) How did the multiple citizenship considerations of belonging, identification, and struggle interact in the process? (4) What were the youth 'doing' that helps us understand their citizenship?

Creating the invited space

Facilitated by the Centre for Global Citizenship Education and Research at the University of Alberta, the Centre for Global Education, based in Edmonton, and in conjunction with TakingITGlobal, the White Paper project occurred in three parts during the winter of 2015 and culminated in the writing of *The National Youth White Paper on Global Citizenship* (see https://goo.gl/m0Frc6). In the first stage of the participatory process, schools, teachers, and youth leaders were invited from across Canada. Although thirteen schools were originally interested, because of various factors, including examination pressure and labour disputes, in the end we worked with five schools – from Western Canada (Alberta), Central Canada (Ontario), and Northern Canada (the Northwest Territories). Schools were chosen based on their diverse geographies and demographics. It is significant that First Nations and Quebec schools were some of the original partners that withdrew, indicating external pressures and a lack of time as reasons. We cannot ignore that these two groups, which have ongoing struggles for justice within the larger project of Canadian nationalism and citizenship, were absent from the final contributions. We view this as a particular policy knowledge that reflects these struggles and their overall invisibility in much of the curriculum and policy related to global citizenship (Shultz, 2015; Llewellyn and Westheimer, 2013; Shultz, 2013). However, the schools that completed the project reflected a great diversity of student participants and did include Indigenous, international, and newcomer students, and youth from a range of geographic locations in Canada.

To begin the work together, each school identified student leaders who went through a four-week training programme in which they learned to use Web 2.0 tools (YouTube, mobile phone voting, Google Docs, H.323 Video Conferencing, discussion boards, blogs, etc.) while engaging in developing their own questions and research about global citizenship. Each week, the student leaders met (online) and presented the research they had done, facilitated by technical assistance from the organization TakingITGlobal. A group of adults, including the organizers, teachers, and identified local and international experts on citizenship, provided feedback and

suggested questions or tasks that would extend the youths' research. The next stage was a full-day session, called the 'Virtual Town Hall', which widened participation to as many students in the schools as possible (several hundred in total), and schools and students were connected via the internet to classrooms and online discussions for the day. The student leaders who had completed the initial training gave keynote web addresses that were framed around three themes, which had been identified during the month-long training sessions to larger groups of students from all the schools. Online discussion forums were busy with comments and critiques from students at all sites. The conclusion of the Virtual Town Hall involved students working on Google Docs collaboratively and simultaneously across all schools to address their jointly constructed questions: '1. What are our obligations as global citizens? What are the rights and responsibilities that we have? 2. To what extent can well-intentioned global citizenship initiatives reinforce or resist power inequities? 3. What types of policies/practices will enable/facilitate global citizenship?' (White Paper, 2015: 1). Students were talking and writing together across Canada in real time, questioning, writing, and revising their statements about global issues and global engagement and how these affected them. Based on the work of that day, a survey was developed to find out more from a wider group of students. Approximately 1,200 students answered the survey questions. The third stage of the project involved members from the student leader group using the work from the Virtual Town Hall and the surveys to co-write the position paper that came to be titled *The National Youth White Paper on Global Citizenship.* The youth launched the White Paper at a meeting in Ottawa in May 2015 to a group of education stakeholders, including members of local school trustees, teacher educators, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, representatives from the Association of Canadian Deans of Education, and several Canadian faculties of education, such as Canadian academics working in global citizenship. Since then, the youth have presented the White Paper to other audiences across Canada.

Our role as facilitators throughout the process involved first contacting and communicating with teachers in the various schools to ensure there would be time and support for the students to engage in the whole process. We also helped to frame questions with students and the identified community experts who were providing ongoing feedback. Our hope was to create a participatory space where the students would move to deeper levels of engagement as the process evolved. Our challenge was to 'let go' of the process to the extent that it could be an authentic representation of the students' collaborative decisions, reflections, critiques, and discussions, providing the invited space with an expanded possibility for student democratic efficacy. Therefore, the White Paper process supplied important information about how global citizenship can be an organizing theme for youth engagement and, also, the extent to which the process we used created a particular kind of invited

citizenship space that Gaventa (2006a: 26) describes as 'opportunities, moments and channels where citizens can act to potentially affect policies, discourses, decisions, and relationships that affect their lives and interests'.

As facilitators, we worked to create an invited space through a pedagogical approach that Expósito (2014: 242) refers to as a 'reflexive point', whereby students 'investigate their location within a complex network of power relations, and ... analyse how such a positioning shapes their subjectivity and circumscribes their possibilities of action and thinking'. He argues that 'to act under the presupposition of equality always implies a disagreement and discomfort with one's position in a given power relationship, or within the network of power relations that shapes our subjectivity and limits our possibilities' (ibid.). This reflexive pedagogy enables students to recognize how others can be affected by power relations and to be either sympathetic to or critical of various practices. In this sense, the reflexive point mediates between committing to equality and 'provoke[ing] the process of participation' (ibid.). We analyse the process by exploring four reflexive points evident in the White Paper content and process. The following discussion of such reflexive points provides an analysis of how students engaged in the invited space and the deliberative process.

Reflexive point 1: Investigating global citizenship as a path to global equity and rights

In the very first sentence of the White Paper, the youth directly linked global citizenship with global equity: 'Representing voices of high school students across Canada, we realize not merely the want, but the need for global equity through global citizenship' (White Paper 2015: 2). The document refers to facing the 'battle against power inequities' that are 'far-reaching into our institutions, cultures, and history' and promoting 'a foundational shift in perspective' (ibid.). The introduction ends with three key ways in which global citizenship should fight power inequities:

1. *Ensure the voices of marginalized and influential citizens are heard equally*

2. *Question what we know and the information we receive about other people in the world and particularly, critically view media in order to challenge preconceived biases, understand varying contexts, and learn how to create sustainable change*

3. *Share the collective duty of enforcing cultural, economic, environmental, and social rights, both individual and collective and encourage a diverse and accepting society*

White Paper (2015: 2)

The statement refers to the implications of having many different experiences (location, age, race, gender, religion) and contexts, and particularly to the fact that

there is a concentration of global power that pushes many to the periphery. The youth recognized the privileging of certain ideas and that decisions are often made by those who experience little to no discrimination, and thus, as they say, have a *skewed* perspective of what is fair and equal. By centring the concepts of equity and 'considering and valuing' difference, the youth promote inclusion of 'the voices of people in undermined groups' along with empathy and open-mindedness (White Paper, 2015: 2). Importantly, the youth pointed out the need to challenge assumptions in popular culture and media. They highlighted how narrow viewpoints emphasize foreign countries' 'foreign nature' and the stereotypes that make it seem that poverty is inherent in so-called 'third world countries' (ibid.: 3). They highlighted 'our historically eurocentric viewpoint' (ibid.) that creates divisions between helper and helpee in international relations. To become better global citizens, the youth maintained it is imperative that 'we stray from our "saviour complex", and instead realize that what we may consider unimaginably generous, may not be in the best interest of the specific developing nation' (ibid.: 4).

Reflexive point 2: Disrupting notions of global as disconnected from local

A key theme in the document is the importance of linking global and local by addressing issues on a national level. The youth insisted that issues 'we face on our own soil' (White Paper, 2015: 4) should not be neglected. They pointed out that stereotypes persist in Canada and suggested prejudices be replaced with a 'desire to achieve an acceptance and understanding of people's difference' (ibid.). The statement promotes the right to live in a society that accepts and values our identities, not as inherently superior or inferior 'based on race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, or any other aspect of identity', with a warning against the continuance of 'intolerant doctrines that plague so many societies' (ibid.: 5).

The youth insisted on making 'spaces for voices of the underrepresented to be heard' and 'direct challenges to current global power inequities' (White Paper, 2015: 5). A particular concern was related to the 'white saviours' of development aid efforts: 'It must be ensured that constructive help is provided to build change *for* local people, with *their* needs, wishes and best interests in mind, to create meaningful and sustainable change' (ibid.). The youth also pointed to the importance of accessing and taking initiative to find a diverse source of information and, correspondingly, knowing one's impact on the world and taking action. They suggested the education system as the best location for fostering global citizenship, as well as less formal education opportunities such as social movements, news from multiple perspectives, and engagement in clubs and local communities. A key theme was the need to educate both youth and adults to be more culturally sensitive and globally aware. Ultimately, the youth made three key recommendations to education leaders:

1. *Add to and revise elementary and high school curricula to create a focus on changing the dominant narrative on global issues*

2. *Support intergenerational discussions to inform and challenge adults while magnifying the youth voice*

3. *Work to understand other cultures and the experiences of minority groups to diversify perspective, build solidarity, challenge injustices, and promote equity*

<div align="right">White Paper (2015: 6)</div>

Reflexive point 3: Taking a position and claiming space within GCE

The youth expressed a concern regarding a lack of a sense of political efficacy on the part of *Generation Y*, which they asserted is the largest generational market and set of voters: 'it is imperative that youth are made aware of the power they truly have' (White Paper, 2015: 6). They expressed markedly the concern that their knowledge and experience were not taken seriously, even as they were the ones who had the most at stake in the long-term impacts of global issues such as climate change and an unequal economic system. They demanded more curricular attention to address these issues, recommending that global citizenship should be introduced early in elementary school and expanded in secondary. These courses would require teachers to be trained to ensure 'that the dominant narrative with implications of Western supremacy is not the perspective' (ibid.: 7) that students receive. Interestingly, they also expressed concern about the problem of the de-valuing of social science and humanities in education. They saw the potential in technology to facilitate communication across cultures, but believed this should not be an educational focus at the expense of wider liberal education goals and content. And, importantly, they took adults to task, insisting they too need education in how 'to become responsible global citizens in a society of rapid change' (ibid.). They also stressed the importance of intergenerational discussions to come to a better understanding and open the possibility of collaborative (and, therefore, effective) action.

There was a strong tone throughout the students' statements. They directly targeted social inequalities and pointed to power inequalities. There was a strong moral undertone as well and a sense of urgency. The students took a strong moral stance and expressed their concern to assert good instead of evil (White Paper, 2015: 3). The statement also refers to the importance of context and speaks to ideas of privilege that challenge any strong binary framing. The youth suggested that students and teachers need ways to talk about complexity that do not fall back into containers of 'good versus evil', but rather help to tease apart the tensions inherent in these complexities and consider where such tensions are dynamic. It is in these tensions that much of the work of GCE takes place (Pashby, 2013).

Reflexive point 4: Invited space and claimed space – the White Paper as policy knowledge for action and change

An important idea that emerges from the 2015 White Paper is that of challenging the dominant narrative. This was written into the text, but also became part of the ongoing discussion in the meetings and on the blogs. While the overall space was what we consider *invited* – owing to its beginnings as a project initiated by adults who were educators and researchers, as well as it being a response to a 'moment in time', or a policy space that opened up to create an opportunity to discuss GCE – the students worked to claim space within the invited space. Students took control of the topics and the direction of the discussions. This was particularly clear in the argument that what were seen as ongoing descriptions of 'how things happened' had created a dominant story of global relations, capacities, and possibilities for equity and justice that privileged some at the expense of others. In a sense, this speaks to Pike's (2008) call for 'reconstructing the legend' of global education, as well as the work of other scholars who recognize that global education is tied to a single story about global places that reproduces historical patterns of representations of the Global South as deficient in relation to the Global North (Martin, 2013; Biddulph, 2011; Abdi and Shultz, 2008). The White Paper pushes for multiple perspectives and equal inclusion of all perspectives. The students challenged development agendas and the so-called developing countries' activities in the world by raising a strong concern about 'voluntourism', the increasingly popular activity where tourists spend time volunteering with an organization in a local community in the country they are visiting (this is also a concern among scholars; see, for example, McGloin and Georgeou, 2016). The students described the problems embedded in these types of relations as perpetuating the legacies of colonialism: 'We, in the western part of the world, are often guilty of being blinded by the idea of a single story ... [and] stereotype[s] of so-called "third world countries", and the poverty which is supposedly inherent to them' (White Paper, 2015: 3).

The White Paper is thus a call for educators to work to develop more pedagogical tools to enable students to recognize the dominant narrative and find various sources of information that truly present different narratives. The importance of multiple perspectives is not a new idea and, in fact, many scholars have emphasized including a diversity of points of view to enable students to make choices about their course of action with regard to global issues (e.g. Evans and Hundey, 2000; Pike, 2000; Pike and Selby, 2000; Pike and Selby, 1999; Merryfield, 1998). However, what the youth called for in the White Paper goes beyond simply adding more perspectives; rather, they demanded an understanding that multiple perspectives are often themselves positioned in ways that reproduce the dominant narrative. The White Paper is calling for pedagogy that equips students to examine the politics of knowledge and

the relation of knowledge and power, including the frames that condition their own responses (Pashby and Andreotti, 2015).

The White Paper reflects an ongoing tendency to educate through setting up binary relations to understand systemic inequality and exclusion. Educators and scholars describe the challenge of working with the realities of current postcolonial conditions while addressing complicity in the reproduction of systems of power (Abdi, 2012; Shultz, 2012; Tikly, 2004). The students expressed this within the White Paper when discussing the complexity of working with a Canadian identity, or 'we', while attempting to avoid creating an 'us' and 'them' binary. The students maintained a commitment to building relations as a means of addressing the issues that face us on the planet, while recognizing the unevenness of some relations due to historical patterns of oppression, colonization, and exclusion. The students were not able to identify the tension in their demand for the inclusion of minoritized voices while, at the same time, insisting on neoliberal notions of individuals being responsible for equality. We suggest this reflects a desire to name inequity, but also a lack of capacity to imagine what a redistribution of global power, as well as the benefits and burdens of globalized societies, might involve or what actions would be required to achieve the equity they demand (see, for example, Fraser, 2009; Fraser, 2005). There is much work within GCE that needs to happen to address this contradiction.

Another important learning from the White Paper process was that Canadian political leaders at all levels should no longer expect youth to be silent or silenced regarding the important issues that face them. The youth took up the invited space in dynamic and highly engaged ways and were able to wrestle with complex global issues and possible solutions to some of the most significant issues that face us. Giroux (2013) describes activist students as an example of new public intellectuals. The youth participation and engagement in the White Paper were both a training ground and an exemplar of public engagement, which provide important ideas and raise social consciousness and knowledge in the public sphere. Time will tell if the students will take this learning into future invited spaces and perhaps even more politically radical claimed spaces. By identifying this important role for youth activists, we can read the White Paper as an emerging public encounter that can shape the spaces not just where it was created but where it is taken up. There have already been several meetings with the youth who participated, and it will be important to watch how public spaces are opened or closed as places for acts of youth public intellectualism and change, in response to the students' policy knowledge and position.

It was clear the process of creating a deliberative public space was an important part of opening the process to new knowledge and understanding about GCE. The White Paper participants were engaged for several months, working on shared research, critiques, writing, and reflexive encounters. The process included youth

from across Canada, Canadian and international adults supporting the process, and outside experts providing feedback. The use of digital technology enabled a space of engagement where a public encounter became more and more entangled as the discussions continued. The final writing process, a highly democratic engagement, demonstrated how knowledge had moved from individual to public over the course of the project.

Conclusion: Acts of citizenship and youth enrolment in citizenship and the public sphere

In this project, we worked to bring together as many Canadian youth as possible, given the limitations on time that schools experience on a daily basis, such as very focused and specific curriculum outcomes and, in the case of two jurisdictions, ongoing labour disputes and funding cuts. Our hopes were that the enrolment of youth as policy actors could contribute to very different policy processes and outcomes, and that the contribution of the youth is taken seriously as Canadian institutions develop their GCE activities. Isin (2008: 382–3, italics added) describes an act of citizenship as '[an act] through which citizens, strangers, outsiders, aliens, emerge not as actors already defined but as a *way of being with others*'. As this paper has shown, the youth perspective presented in the White Paper spoke of their approach to global citizenship as a contested topic, based on contested spaces, spaces of knowledge, and relationships. They grappled with the complexity of international relations and engagements that are considered within the topic of global citizenship, and identified ways in which these relations must be improved if we are to achieve any progress towards wellbeing. Schools, the formal institution from which they spoke, have few spaces for making the shifts the students suggest; therefore, achieving the kind of citizenship that Isin (2008) imagined, where a citizen subject is produced, will not likely happen inside of schools alone. The youth spoke of relations within and among communities, from the local to the global, and of how building these communities requires schools to create more flexible boundaries that will include greater chances for the emerging citizens to practise and enact their citizenships. An invited space, such as the one used for the White Paper, is an example of how that can happen.

GCE and the public sphere

Youth today exist in complex situated realities and face a time of great precarity (Puar, 2012). Given the large amount of literature and distinct instrumental and pedagogical agendas operating under the umbrella of GCE, we are committed to finding ways to ensure students' complex lived realities are engaged in the processes of educating for global citizenship. Research suggests students already think of themselves as global citizens (e.g. Richardson, 2008; Myers, 2006) and this should be recognized in GCE curriculum development and programme implementation.

Taylor (2011: 177) reminds us that an approach to GCE 'of "bringing the world into our classrooms" forgets that our classrooms are always already in this world' and inherits geo-political power relations written through social categories and identities. Youth have important policy knowledge and understand that they live in a globalized world that includes unacceptable inequalities and oppressions. They also understand that, through acts of citizenship, these conditions can be changed. The youth experienced this in their participation in developing public opinion and working in the public sphere while developing the policy paper. Much of the education taking place under the umbrella of GCE tends to focus on the 'global' and make assumptions about how citizenship would lead from the widened spatial location of issues and encounters. Citizenship is, of course, complex and contested at all levels and the era of interest in a multi-scalar citizenship (global citizenship) provides us with opportunities to understand the issues and relations that underpin those that cross borders of all sorts. The White Paper was meant to influence policies in Canada at the local and national levels in organizations – from local school authorities, provincial ministries, and federal government departments to NGOs – that position themselves as working 'globally'.

If youth were included in the public issues that affect them as members of society – and as global citizens with great interest in the decisions about planetary issues such as climate change, militarization, and global economic relations – given the very open engagement by the youth participating in this project, we are optimistic that youth-led deliberative engagement within invited spaces, such as that demonstrated in the White Paper project, can bring a much more just inclusion of perspectives into policy processes.

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